



# THE INDEPENDENT

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# 200 'corrupt' police face charges

UP TO 200 Metropolitan police officers could be implicated in the biggest corruption inquiry in British policing for a quarter of a century.

A 180-strong investigation team set up by Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan police Commissioner, has uncovered "criminality of the highest level" by some of Scotland Yard's most prized detectives. Senior Metropolitan police sources said that serving detective chief inspectors and retired superintendents would

BY IAN BURRELL  
Home Affairs Correspondent

be among those charged with offences carrying sentences of up to 15 years. Corrupt officers have made hundreds of thousands of pounds from organising major drug deals and armed robberies. They are also implicated in contract killings. Already 34 officers have been suspended, and large numbers of arrests are expected later this summer. The corrupt officers are be-

lieved to have been responsible for dozens of wrongful convictions, and the investigation team and government lawyers are trawling through their career histories looking for miscarriages of justice.

The investigation, which is growing by the day, is the biggest corruption inquiry in British policing history.

A senior Scotland Yard source said: "We have been shocked by the level and seriousness of the criminality and by the arrogance of the officers

who thought they could get away with it."

Of those officers confronted with allegations of corruption, three in ten have so far agreed to co-operate with the inquiry and amnesties are being offered to some of the minor offenders who agree to give evidence against other officers.

Several of those giving evidence have had to be moved to safe houses and one investigating officer has been taken off the inquiry after intimidation. The corrupt officers have

also gone to great lengths to cover their tracks by living in modest bungalows and investing their illegal earnings in off-shore accounts. The detectives worked in some of the most elite units in the police service, including the Flying Squad, the South-East Regional Crime Squad, and the new National Crime Squad.

A Yard source said: "For 95 per cent of their time they were some of our best detectives but in the other 5 per cent they became organised criminals."

Networks of serving and retired police officers and villains have been uncovered.

On Wednesday, as part of the corruption inquiry, a detective from the National Crime Squad was arrested and charged with stealing cash from a London police station, together with a detective sergeant from the Flying Squad unit at Rigg Approach, north-east London. He became the 15th serving or former member of the Rigg Approach unit to be suspended as part of the investigation.

In January, raids were carried out on the homes of 19 members of the unit.

Last week a 41-year-old detective constable, formerly with the South-East Regional Crime Squad which targets major drug dealers, was charged with plotting to supply cannabis and stealing £800 in public funds.

Scotland Yard chiefs have been so horrified by their findings that they have been liaising with forces in other metropolitan areas where it is believed similar levels of cor-

ruption may exist. South Yorkshire police has suspended 11 officers and two members of its civilian staff in an investigation into allegations of irregularities in the administration of the Firearms Surrender and Compensation Scheme.

Details of the corruption scandal come as the force is bracing itself for the findings of the public inquiry into the death of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

Bent coppers, page 4

## Pound deals a hammer blow to Britain plc

BRITAIN'S BATTERED manufacturing industry took a fresh hammer blow from the strong pound yesterday as Rover axed 1,500 jobs and put its car plants on a four-day week - and close to £1bn was wiped from the value of the chemicals giant ICI.

The grim omen from two of the country's flagship companies was accompanied by fresh signs of a downturn on the High Street and figures showing a further widening in Britain's global trade gap.

A poll of City economists forecast that Britain could be plunged into a full-blown recession if the Bank of England opts to raise interest rates again next month. Rover's parent company

BY MICHAEL HARRISON

But the Prime Minister's official spokesman and the trade unions suggested the cutbacks were linked to Rover's desire to improve levels of productivity and labour flexibility.

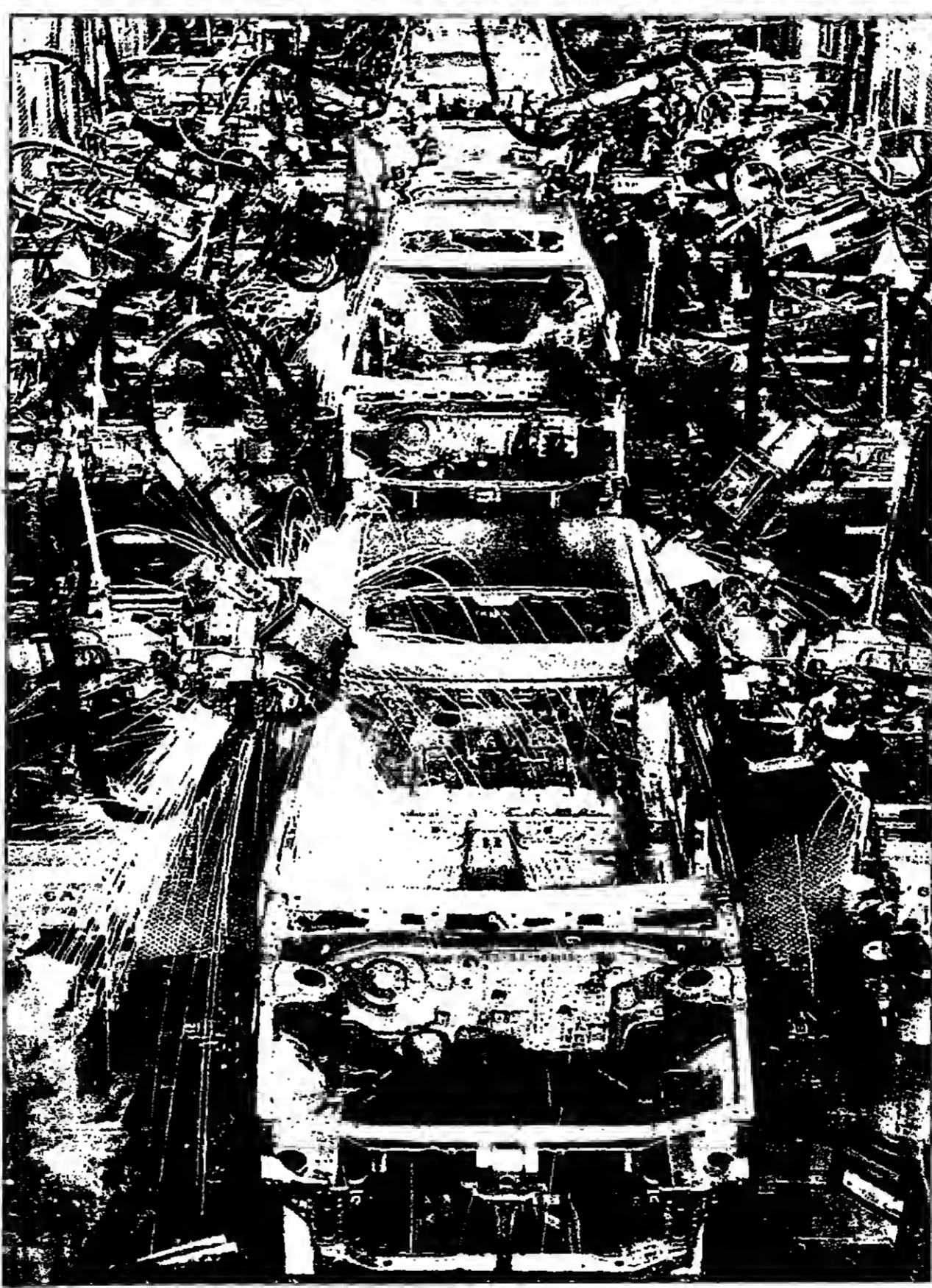
Rover's assembly plants at Longbridge, Solihull and Oxford will begin a four-day week from mid-August and remain on lower production levels for the rest of the year, cutting output by 40,000 cars.

The company said it would make every attempt to avoid compulsory job losses through natural wastage, early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

Meanwhile ICI, a bellwether of British industry, shocked the City by warning that profits would be lower in the second half of the year, blaming the "horrendous" pound, the Asian economic downturn and sluggish sales of bulk chemicals.

The warning wiped 16 per cent off its market value and sparked fears that more bad news is in store. The UK's global trade deficit in goods reached £1.85bn in May, up from £1.39bn in April. Imports are increasing at twice the rate of exports, exacerbating manufacturers' attempts to cushion falling overseas demand with higher domestic sales.

High Street shops are also feeling the pinch. Shares in Hamley's, Britain's best-known toy shop, plunged 27 per cent after it warned that profits would be lower because the strong pound was deterring tourists. The chemists chain Boots also warned of a slowdown in sales and an increasingly fragile domestic market.



Longbridge, 1992... the Rover assembly plant will begin operating a four-day week from mid-August. Ben Head

## Hundreds killed by burns 'cure'

A TREATMENT which has been given to critically ill patients for half a century may be costing 600 lives a year, researchers have found.

Doctors who assessed all the research on albumin, a constituent of blood first used to treat wounded soldiers in the Second World War, found it caused six deaths among every 100 patients treated. Over the decades, it may have cost thousands of lives.

The Medicines Control Agency responded to the findings, published in the *British Medical Journal*, by setting up an expert working party which met for the first time yesterday. The health department said: "We are taking this seriously and acting swiftly."

Albumin, a protein-rich liquid derived from blood, is given to an estimated 100,000 patients a year as a replacement for blood lost through injury or disease. It is specifically li-

BY JEREMY LAURANCE  
Health Editor

censed for the treatment of shock and burns and for seriously ill patients whose blood protein level has dropped. It is often given to accident victims.

The study, led by Dr Ian Roberts, of the Cochrane Injuries Group at the Institute of Child Health, London, examined 30 trials involving more than 1,400 critically ill patients and found no evidence that albumin saved lives and a "strong suggestion" that it increased deaths.

The alternative to albumin is saline, a salt solution which is easier and cheaper to make. Most of the studies found it was better, Dr Roberts said. "This is an opportunity to save lives and save money."

The study raises doubts about other treatments which have become accepted without hard evidence that they work.

### INSIDE

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BMW is also switching £1bn of component purchases from UK firms to overseas suppliers. The move, designed to offset sterling's 30 per cent appreciation since the start of 1996, could put a further 10,000 to 20,000 jobs at risk.

Dr Walter Hasselkus, Rover's chief executive, insisted that the only reasons for its drastic action were "the strong pound, the strong pound and the strong pound".

John Redwood, the Conservative trade and industry spokesman, said the Rover job losses were the result of "a recession made in Downing Street".

## UK pledges big cut in Sellafield discharges

BRITAIN yesterday promised to remove all its disused oil rigs from the North Sea and bring radioactive discharges from Sellafield nuclear plant "close to zero", in two bold green policy moves that left environmentalists delighted.

At a meeting of European environment ministers in Sintra, Portugal, the deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, convinced Sellafield's most vocal critics, Ireland and Norway, who re-

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY  
in Sintra

ceive its seaboard discharges, that the Government would crack down so hard on its emissions that there was no need for the 8,000-job plant to close.

And he dismayed the UK offshore oil industry by presenting it with a £9bn bill for removing all the North Sea's oil platforms at the end of their natural lives, thus setting in

stone his party's promise that there would be "no more Brent Spas under Labour".

It was a sweet moment for the former seaman who spent much of his early political career as a campaigner against maritime pollution. To achieve it, Mr Prescott, in a bravura display of real political power, overturned the negotiating positions formerly maintained by UK civil servants, who had been seeking wide-ranging ex-

emptions to oil-rig removal and much weaker restrictions on Sellafield's discharges. "I was ashamed of Britain's record in the past," he said. "But now we have shed the tag of The Dirty Man of Europe and we have joined the family of nations."

Mr Prescott and his deputy, the Environment Minister Michael Meacher, agreed a comprehensive new clean-seas treaty with the 15 member states of the Oslo-Paris con-

vention (Ospar), which is to regulate the marine environment in the North-East Atlantic.

It envisages completely halting the discharge of dangerous chemicals to the seas by 2020, and the setting up of a network of deep-sea protected reserves for marine life. But the two most significant steps are the legally binding commitments on Britain to remove oil-rigs and bring Sellafield's emissions "close to zero", also by 2020.



Old rigs are to be removed

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# A bad day for Britain plc

## CAR MANUFACTURE

### Jobs squeeze puts Rover into reverse

BY PAUL VALLELY  
AND LINUS GREGORIADIS

IT WAS sunny yesterday, but inside the Rover plant at Cowley a cloud hung over the workforce as they went into huddles to discuss the latest rumour about the 1,500 job losses which they, and the company's other two car production lines, will have to sustain.

"We have been told they want a four-day week and more flexibility among the workforce," said one Cowley veteran as he rode out of Rover No 1 gate on a rickety old bicycle with his trousers tucked into his socks. He had worked there as a production operator for 25 years and thought, in the circumstances, that it would be better if he did not give his name. It would be people like him who were first for the chop, he reckoned.

"They want to move people from Longbridge to Solihull but they won't go," he said. "It seems that generally they want to shunt people from one plant to another. The staff aren't very happy."

Rover is blaming the adverse effects of the strong pound for the job losses. The company says the high exchange rate will force it to buy about £1bn more components from abroad. Some 20,000 British automotive jobs could be affected by the fallout.

The company's uniformed guards who manned its gates yesterday seemed there as much to keep the tide of rumour at bay as to protect the secrets of Rover's new executive flagship car, the R40, which will replace the company's ageing 800 saloon when the final model rolls out of the gates in October.

The Rover workers stood around inside the factory - with the smokers nipping outside to talk over their ciggies - and considered the arguments. "I understand industries with exports are affected by the strong value of the pound," said one 47-year-old production line worker who lives in Reading, "but at the same time there is a feeling that the BMW board are using that as a pretext."

"It's got nothing at all to do with the pound," interjected another worker. "It's all about changing work practices."

Certainly some changes are needed. After BMW bought Rover in 1994 it made the decision to get out of the fleet car market with its high volume but cut-throat profit margins.

The company tried to repackage itself to attract the private-buyer niche market. The PR men say the new R40 will hark back to the forties and fifties, creating "a large, imposing, beautifully styled model which epitomises what a Rover was supposed to be about". There has even been talk of re-viving names like Riley, Wolseley and Aston Martin.

It seemed a good strategy. But as a result Rover's share of the UK car market is only about 10 per cent - a third of what it was two decades ago.

Almost 60 per cent of its cars now go abroad. Sales to the Continent last year rose sharply - up by a third to Italy and by 41 per cent to Germany.

This year exports are likely to be at a similar level, with about 290,000 of the 520,000 cars it produces going abroad. Unfortunately at current exchange rates these exports are not profitable.

More than that, the current squeeze in labour markets is driving up pay settlements, robbing the UK of its traditional advantage - low pay costs in comparison with countries such as Germany. It has thrown into sharp relief the fact that the British car industry's productivity is 30 per cent behind that of Germany and 100 per cent behind Japan's.

Some Cowley workers yesterday faced up to that. "What management are doing definitely makes sense," said one 22-year-old apprentice technician from Chipping Norton. "We have to reduce the costs of the business and introduce more flexibility. We have to stay competitive to survive. It is no good hanging on to old systems. I can see what they are doing."

There were other theories. In the City there was talk that BMW was putting pressure on the Government to make a commitment to join the euro, which analysts reckon would immediately wipe around 15 per cent off the value of the pound. If that made the Cowley workers pawns in a far bigger game, they were used to it. "We never get told anything," said one disconsolate worker. "We are always the last to know. It is pretty depressing in there. I think people are beyond being worried."

The older man swung his leg over his bike. "BMW want to get people like me, who are over 50, out of here," he said. "I suppose I will have to see what they are offering." And off he rode.



Rover workers leaving the Longbridge plant after management announced that 1,500 jobs were to go at the German-owned carmaker

Ben Head

## THE HIGH STREET

### Spending slowdown hits Boots and Hamleys

THERE WAS further evidence of a high street slowdown yesterday when the toy retailer Hamleys's warned of lower profits and Boots issued a caution on weakening consumer demand, writes Nigel Cope.

Hamleys's has been hit by lower tourist spending caused by the strong pound, as well as a slide in demand from UK shoppers at its Regent Street store. Boots has suffered from a decline in orders from other retailers, for whom it makes cosmetics and toiletries.

"The UK economy is showing signs of slowing down and there is evidence of weaker retail sales in what is an increasingly fragile domestic market," said Sir Michael Angus, chairman of Boots.

The announcements are the latest in a series of downbeat signals emerging from the high street as higher interest rates



take their toll. Poor weather and the World Cup were blamed for a retail slump last month, and shops are struggling to match last year's sales, when figures were boosted by building society windfalls.

Nathan Cookrell, retail analyst at city stockbroker BT Alex Brown, said the slump could get worse, and warned: "Retail jobs could start to disappear."

## INDUSTRY

### Alarm bells for ICI as its shares take a £1bn tumble

THE CHEMICALS giant ICI joined other big exporters such as British Steel, Coats Vyeella and SmithKline Beecham yesterday in warning of the impact of the strong pound on overseas profits, writes Trevor Webster.

ICI reported half-year profits up 23 per cent at £197m, but warned that second-half profits would fall short of the £225m earned in the same period a year ago.

It blamed the strength of the pound, which wiped £40m off first-half earnings, as well as downturns in Asian markets and bulk chemicals markets. ICI's warning shocked the City and set analysts downgrading their 1998 profit forecasts by £30-100m from a range of £400-500m to one of £300-400m.

On the stock market, ICI shares plunged 131p to 780p, wiping nearly £1bn off its value as a quoted company. The board



held the half-year dividend at 12.5p and said they are "not forecasting a disaster, just giving a prudent warning". They added that dividends are not at risk, while they claimed that ICI's drive to cut loose from its traditional bulk chemical business and expand in consumer chemicals "is paying off handsomely".

Its struggles are with its remaining bulk industrial chemical interests, which still have a turnover of £2bn and fell into the red in the first half.

## THE TRADE GAP

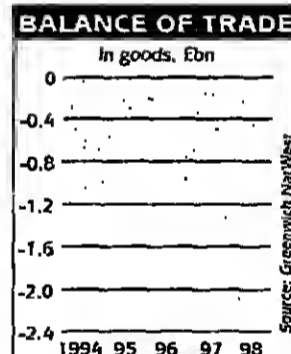
### Strong pound and Asian crisis take their toll

OFFICIAL FIGURES released yesterday confirmed that the strong pound and the Asian crisis are continuing to take their toll on UK exporters, writes Lea Patterson.

The UK trade deficit widened by a further £500m in May, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Imports of goods and services exceeded exports by £1.2bn in May, compared with a trade gap of £666m in April.

The picture looks bleaker when the UK's trade surplus in services is taken out of the data. In May, the UK was £628m in the black in services, meaning that the deficit in "visible" goods - which includes all manufactured goods - was £1.9bn. In April, the trade surplus in services was £700m and the deficit in visible goods £1.4bn.

Life has been particularly difficult for UK exporters trying to



compete in Asia. These companies have been hit by a double whammy of a strong pound - which makes UK exports less competitive - and the Asian crisis - which has reduced demand for all types of goods, including UK exports. ONS figures show that the visible goods deficit with countries outside the EU widened from £777m in April to £1.55bn in May.

## Not a recession just yet, but worse could be on the way



HAMISH MCRAE

NO, THIS is not recession - yet. But the clutch of dismal news from key chunks of British industry, plus the evidence of a continuing deteriorating trend in our current account, confirms that growth is going to slow sharply through the autumn. The slow-down is here.

Of course, there had to be a slowdown of some sort. The faster-than-trend growth of the past five years was bound to flatten out. Mounting strains in

the economy have been showing for some time: average earnings have been rising at more than 4 per cent, there are quite serious shortages in some sectors of skill, consumer credit has been booming and, until recently at least, the housing market has been strong.

But, while British exporters have been warning of pressure on margins since sterling's recovery during spring and summer last year, it has only been

the past three or four months that this pressure has started to show through in the trade figures and in inflation.

The pressure on manufacturing had been more than offset by very strong growth in the much larger service sector. Taking last year as a whole, the country was in current-account surplus, with the traditional trade deficit more than offset by invisible earnings. And through the spring the Bank of

England was sufficiently confident inflationary pressures would subside to resist further increases in interest rates.

In the past two months, however, the outlook has deteriorated in three respects. First, UK inflationary pressures did not seem to be receding as fast as the Bank's Monetary Committee had expected. Accordingly, with only one dissenting vote, it pushed up interest rates a notch fur-

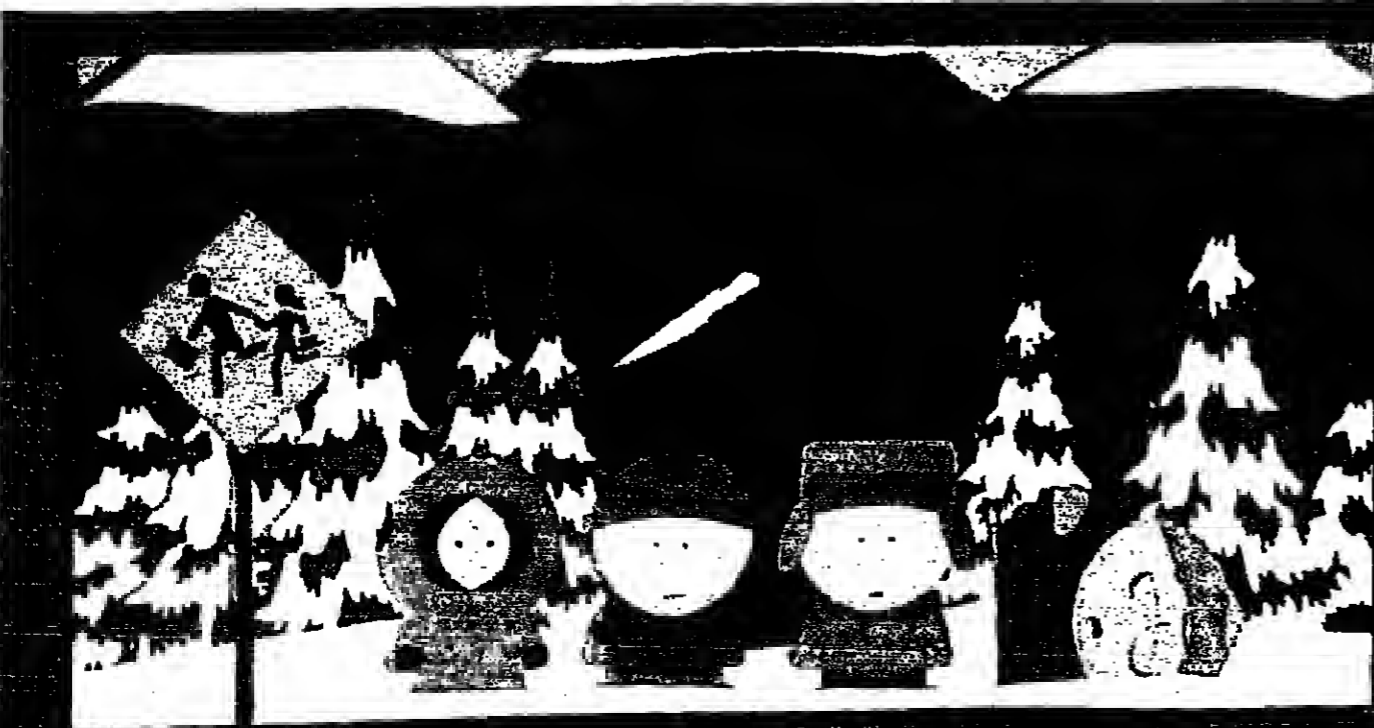
ther. Second, the real economy seemed to slow, with service-sector growth starting to come off too - though this slow-down is not yet confirmed by the GDP figures, and so we don't have much feel for how serious it is. And third, the world economic outlook has deteriorated quite sharply. The world's second-largest economy, Japan, is officially in recession, the measure being two successive quarters of negative

growth. The world's largest economy, the US, has just experienced a flat three months - and may even have shrunk in the April/June quarter. And, finally, the slump in the emerging economies of East Asia has, if anything, spread even further, engulfing Hong Kong, previously one of its brightest spots.

None of this means that a global recession is inevitable. France and Germany have

continued a steady if unspectacular recovery, though the latest figures suggest some slow-down, and Italian growth is very poor.

What it does mean is that the risks to world growth are greater now than at any time since the early 1990s. What Britain is experiencing, so far in a mild form, may be a taste of something more widespread and more alarming in the months to come.



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# Allason v Alastair ends in a draw



Alastair Campbell yesterday: 'I don't consider myself to be a control freak'

Richard Lewis

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL is not a control freak, and that's official. He said so himself at the High Court yesterday.

Mr Campbell, the Prime Minister's chief press secretary, and New Labour's spin doctor general, was appearing as a witness in former Tory MP Rupert Allason's legal action against the *Mirror* newspaper.

He was in rapid rebuttal mode even before getting into the witness box, castigating an *Evening Standard* reporter for his account of the previous day's proceedings, during which Mr Allason had claimed that a *Mirror* journalist, David Bradshaw, had been given a government post in curious circumstances.

This was the return leg of Mr Allason's long-running legal feud with the *Mirror*, which began with a six-line article in 1992. Four years later he won

BY KIM SENGUPTA

a pyrrhic victory at the High Court when he succeeded only partly in his claim of malicious falsehood against Mr Campbell and the newspaper, and failed to win any damages because the judge decided he had not suffered any financial loss because of the article. He was also left with the legal bill of around £250,000.

The former MP for Torbay now claims the article cost him a £75,000 deal for a book on the history of a security firm.

Messrs Campbell and Allason don't much like each other. At the end of their last court encounter the judge, Sir Maurice Drake noted the "utter contempt" that seemed to exist between them, which was clear from the way that they gave evidence.

The two men's paths have

not crossed much since then, but absence has not, it seems, mellowed the antipathy between them. As Mr Campbell walked into court No 13 to take the stand Mr Allason, who conducted his own case, kept his eyes firmly on a bundle of papers in front of him. The exchanges which followed ranged between frosty and cold.

The two men are very different. The podgy-faced Mr Allason, with a hairstyle reminiscent of a 1970s footballer, was in a crumpled pin-stripe suit. Mr Campbell, angular but with a hint of a double chin, seemed to be straight off the New Labour production line with his neat hair and crease-free suit.

Mr Allason asked: "There have been many judgments about your character - that you are a control freak. Do you agree that you like to exercise

control over other people, and that you express yourself forcefully?"

Mr Campbell responded: "I don't think the two are the same thing. I don't consider myself to be a control freak."

He also denied that he was prickly about criticism. Mr Campbell said: "In my current capacity I may deal with criticism of the person who employs me if I think it is based on unfounded claims. The criticism of me does not bother me, criticism is part and parcel of the world we inhabit."

Mr Campbell was asked under what circumstances he had recommended Mr Bradshaw's appointment to the Strategic Development Unit in No 10.

Mr Justice Popplewell intervened to warn Mr Allason about his line of questioning. The case continues.

## Mandelson's jibes anger Brazilians

BY ALISON LITTLE

DOWNING STREET yesterday went to Peter Mandelson's defence after he was branded in Brazil as no more than a "vulgar propagandist".

The Minister without Portfolio was said to have inflamed the country's left-wing Workers' Party by describing its views as "backward and traditional".

But Downing Street and Mr Mandelson, who flew back into the UK yesterday, insisted he had been careful not to intervene in the politics of the country, where an election is to be held in October.

He went to Brazil on Saturday at the invitation of the country's centrist President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, made when he visited Britain in December.

Mr Mandelson met the President, members of the opposition Workers' Party, and academics. He also promoted a Portuguese version of a collection of Tony Blair's speeches, *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country*, with a foreword by the President.

Mr Mandelson was quoted in a newspaper as saying the views of the Workers' Party presidential candidate Luiz Inacio "Lula" Da Silva did not fit in with New Labour thinking. He told the Brazilian daily *O Estado De Sao Paulo* that "Lula" emphasised a "backward and traditional view" which was not consistent with the centre-left, and that people



Mandelson: 'Vulgar'

would be "surprised" if the President was not re-elected.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: "Peter Mandelson made no comment or intervention in the election campaign." He added: "He made no attack on Lula."

Mr Mandelson said he had met representatives of all the parties in Brazil, including the Workers' Party. "They are divided between those who want to cling to traditional policies of state ownership and centralised government and those who want to change and modernise. The only people criticising me are the old wing of this party," he said.

"Brazil is now transforming itself into a mature and economically successful democracy thanks largely to its Social Democrat leader, Cardoso. He deserves a lot of praise because no one to his left or his right could have achieved more."

## Ministers in clear over Sierra Leone

FOREIGN OFFICE ministers are expected to receive good news today as an independent inquiry into the Sierra Leone affair clears them of serious wrongdoing.

The report by Sir Thomas Legg, which is expected to be delivered today and published on Monday, is not thought to have criticised any minister strongly enough to warrant a sacking.

However, it is likely to criticise some Foreign Office officials and to question why ministers did not find out sooner that Customs and Excise was investigating a breach of an arms embargo on Sierra Leone.

One minister, Tony Lloyd, told MPs he did not know until the end of April, when the story broke in a newspaper, about the investigation. However, Foreign Office officials were aware of it in February.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, has said repeatedly that no minister knew in advance

BY FRAN ABRAMS  
Political Correspondent

that British mercenaries were planning to breach the UN embargo.

The mercenary company Sandline International shipped arms to help reinstate the exiled president of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

A question mark still remains over the future of the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold. Although Mr Cook praised him when he spoke to the Foreign Affairs Committee two weeks ago, he did not rule out the possibility that he might have to be disciplined.

Mr Penfold became close to President Kabbah, who had the support of the British Government, when the two were exiled in Guinea Bissau together after a coup last year.

Mr Penfold also met representatives of Sandline during the run-up to the counter-coup.

PHILIP HENSHER

*I have a sort of lingering feeling that people ought to take responsibility for their past, and not just treat it as a picturesque detail*

THE FRIDAY REVIEW, PAGE 4

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that a respondent set out to smear the applicants."

After the award Chris Myant, a CRE spokesman, said: "It is one of the most serious cases of racial discrimination to come before an industrial tribunal in Britain which involves young women of this age."

"It is remarkable that these young people had the courage to take the leap into the dark and take on their employers. No one in their working life should have to experience this kind of intimidation. It's inhuman and outrageous."

"Here we are almost 22 years on from the Race Relations Act and we have yet another generation having to go through what their parents thought, and quite rightly should have been eradicated years ago."

Last night Saima Nazir said: "The way Yorkshire Envelopes treated us was really nasty and what made it worse was the way they came to the tribunal and tried to make out it was all our fault."

"I couldn't believe some of the things they came out with, but it backedfired on them."

However, the firm was unrepentant yesterday, insisting that it had done nothing wrong and stating it would not be reviewing the way it operates. One of its directors, Robert Shearer, said: "We still believe we were right and they were wrong."

Shabnum Sharif, standing in front of her colleagues (left to right) Naheed Akhtar, Saima Nazir and her twin Asma, after being awarded nearly £50,000 for 'one of the most serious race bias' cases *Asadour Guzelian*

FRANK DOBSON, the Health Secretary, ordered an independent review yesterday into allegations that a consultant chest surgeon was inadequately qualified for the job.

Joe Rahamin, who is estimated to have carried out more than 6,000 operations at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, where he has been employed as a consultant since 1992, was reported to have no post-graduate qualifications in the speciality.

It was also claimed that he was the only cardiothoracic surgeon in the country who had not completed higher surgical training. But his employers, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, pointed out that he was a thoracic [chest] and not a cardiac [heart] surgeon.

The Department of Health said the review, which would include lay and expert members, would also look at thoracic surgical services at Plymouth.

The Trust moved yesterday to defend Mr Rahamin, while stressing that its own investigation was continuing into "potentially serious" issues. A preliminary investigation by a panel set up by the Trust had found "no reason to doubt Mr Rahamin's technical skills as a surgeon", and his post-operative death rates were "within the normal range".

Arthur Wilson, chief executive of the Trust, said: "My first consideration in handling this inquiry has been the safety of patients. Mr. Rahamim has worked in Plymouth for the past 20 years and his colleagues speak very highly of him."

Mr Wilson said Mr Rahamim was on annual leave and had not been suspended, but the Department of Health said he would not return to work "until the Trust decides what his future duties should be".

The allegations, made on *Channel 4 News*, included the charge that Mr Rahamin was not a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, which has since become a requirement for appointment as a consultant. The Trust said the board which appointed him had been "fully aware" he was not a Fellow.



**THE PRESS** Complaints Commission has made a key ruling approving newspaper payments to convicted criminals, after investigating four national titles.

The commission has ruled that there was sufficient public interest to allow publication by the *Times* of Gitta Sereny's book on the child-killer Mary Bell; for the *Daily Telegraph* to

**BY PAUL MCCANN**  
Media Editor

serialise a book by the convicted IRA terrorist Sean O'Callaghan; and for both the *Mirror* and the *Express* to run exclusive interviews with the nurses Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan, convicted in Saudi Arabia of murder.

judging whether the newspapers had breached its code, and not whether they were morally justified in making the payments they did.

The Commission found the *Times'* public-interest justification for serialising *Cries Unheard* by Gitta Sereny to be "compelling" because of its relevance to a number of issues relating to crime and

punishment. What it could not rule on was the harassment of Bell herself by several tabloid newspapers, because no complaint had been received. But the Commission made clear its "very great deal of sympathy" for Mary Bell's daughter, whose identity was revealed by the press.

The eight-page ruling found the case for interviewing the

two convicted nurses to be substantial, particularly because the Government had been involved in the case.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the PCC, said yesterday: "All of us found ourselves uncomfortable about some of these payments and welcome the fact that the Government is looking at the law on this matter. We will help them in any way we can."

## Mary Bell: harassment

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# Bishops in deadlock on gay priests

**BISHOPS** AT the Lambeth Conference yesterday refused to compromise on the issue of practising homosexuals in the church. Neither side was prepared to give way, a senior clergyman said after angry clashes during discussions on the issue.

The Bishop of Johannesburg, the Right Rev Duncan Buchanan, who is in charge of the debates on homosexuality at the conference, said his fellow bishops held such polarised views on the subject that a two-way conversation was virtually impossible. Of the first meeting, he said: "They were articulate, but I don't think there was much listening."

The gathering in Canterbury of Anglican bishops from all over the world is being dominated by sharp divisions over the issue of practising gay priests and same-sex unions. Bishop Buchanan said he doubted whether plans for an international commission to discuss the ordination of gays and the blessing of same-sex marriages would come to fruition. "I believe that for many people that would not be the best way forward," he said, adding that the best possible outcome would be if bishops agreed to disagree.

"One of the things we will almost certainly have to do in our report is say we reached no consensus on this. That's an honest statement. We are not trying to say all is well or that we are all at war with each other," he added.

Doubts about the commission will dismay the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey. While he takes a "traditional" line on the subject of homosexuality, in his capacity as head of the Anglican Communion he has endorsed the idea of a commission to examine the issue.

Conservative and evangelical bishops from Africa and the southern hemisphere are bitterly opposed to homosexual clergy and object to the subject being discussed at all. They

BY CLARE GARNER

regard the problem of international debt as far more pressing, and maintain that homosexuality is "a white man's disease".

However, at the press briefing yesterday, Bishop Buchanan said: "While many people are saying that it is a white man's importation, much of the evidence is that homosexuality - particularly with men - is practised extensively throughout Africa. It's not quite as innocent as you think." He also reminded the conference that "homosexuality does not mean paedophilia. Some of the most aggressive paedophiles are heterosexuals".

Pressure on the Church to confront the issue has come mainly from liberal American bishops, led by the controversial Bishop of Newark, New Jersey, the Right Rev John Spong, and the UK-based Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM). The Bishop of Edinburgh, the Right Rev Richard Holloway, yesterday launched the LGCM's "Rainbow Ribbon Day", calling upon bishops to wear a ribbon in support of a "truly inclusive Church".

Speaking on the morning after the Lords struck out a Commons amendment to reduce the homosexual age of consent from 18 to 16, Bishop Holloway said: "If the Church is to be true to the all-embracing nature of Christ's love, it will one day have to accept with joy the fact that among God's children are gay and lesbian people."

He rejected suggestions that the pro-gay lobby was trying to hijack the conference, but added: "We hope that some time will be found to think about the injustice that has been done to generations of gays and lesbians. God's hidden people, misunderstood, maligned, persecuted and killed. It is in our day and in our culture that they have finally said 'enough', and walked out of the shadows to claim their place in God's light."

The discussion on sexuality is one of 20 sections of the Lambeth Conference which are being held in private this week and next.

In the final week of the conference, the different sections will propose resolutions on their assigned subjects, which will be debated at plenary meetings.

Bishop Buchanan said that bishops had opted for his section "in order to protect [their] point of view" and had no illusions about the depths of disagreement. "One of the delegates said they don't even have a word in their vocabulary for homosexuality."



The Bishop of Edinburgh, Richard Holloway, launches the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement's 'Rainbow Ribbon Day'

David Rose

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## Bugs resistant to antibiotics on the increase

BY JEREMY LAURANCE  
Health Editor

**SUPERBUGS** RESISTANT to antibiotics are growing worse in the UK and could render some patients untreatable, doctors have warned.

One in six infections with salmonella, the commonest cause of food poisoning, are caused by strains resistant to at least four drugs, and latest figures from the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) show that the organism is also developing resistance to other drugs. One strain, salmonella typhimurium DT 104, has in some cases developed resistance to seven antibiotics. The strain causes 3,000 infections a year, and about 95 per cent of isolates of the bacterium are resistant to at least four drugs. The organism is now widespread in cattle and humans in the UK and America.

Dr John Threlfall, from the PHLS, whose findings are published in a letter to *The Lancet*, said salmonella normally caused stomach infections with diarrhoea and abdominal pain but in some cases could infect the blood. While stomach infections may cause sickness, blood poisoning can kill.

Although the level of human blood infection in the UK is low, 13 per cent of cases in the US had bloodstream invasion, according to one report. Dr Threlfall said: "It is quite fortunate at the moment that strains are not supervirulent, but that is what we are worried about. Different strains could emerge that are more invasive. This is a mutatable beast."

He said the appearance of drug-resistant salmonella was a direct result of antibiotic use on farms. "These drugs are used legitimately for therapeutic purposes in animals, but at the same time they cause



Sir Kenneth Calman: set to curb use of antibiotics

increasing resistance." He pointed out that *E. coli* was a relatively harmless bug until the O157 strain emerged, killing 20 people in Scotland and causing a serious outbreak in Japan.

Sir Kenneth Calman, the Government's chief medical officer, is expected to announce measures to curb the use of antibiotics following a major review of the growing problem of bacterial resistance. Earlier this year he said people had to understand that they did not need an antibiotic every time they went to the doctor's with a cough or cold.

In Britain, an estimated 50 million prescriptions for antibiotics are issued every year. Sometimes patients demand the drugs and doctors find it convenient to issue a prescription as a way of getting them out of the surgery.

An investigation by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee warned in April that we were in danger of slipping back to the pre-antibiotic era as untreatable diseases emerged. The Lords report called for curbs on prescribing by doctors, a public education campaign and restrictions on the use of antibiotics in animals.

Chest surgeon to face review

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COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION



## DAVID THOMAS AND MITCHELL SYMONS

Readers are invited to submit their list of the top 10 worst books. We will print a selection next week, and the best list will receive a bottle of champagne. Please send entries to: Worst Books, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

That said, he's one final observation. The Best Of list is full of Great Works, but there is little sense of the culture that has formed our times. A list of the finest popular fiction, including PC Woodhouse, Raymond Chandler, Ian Fleming, Elmore Leonard and even Agatha Christie would be truer to the spirit of the age than the one picked by Random House. So, we suggest, would be most of the books on this list. They may be piled high with crap ... but then, so was most of the 20th century.

**94. Flaubert's Parrot**  
Julian Barnes  
Julian's little self-indulgence

**31. No Exit**  
Julie Burchill  
Scarcely possible that a book could be worse or more tasteless than *Ambition* – a feat she manages triumphantly

**43. The Bone People**  
Keri Hulme  
Those irrepressible Booker

**Jurassic Park was pop fiction at its best. This was barrel-scraping at its worst.**

**66. Of Love and Shadows**  
Isabel Allende  
As overrated as a writer as

## 82. Who Killed Nick Saint

Gyles Brandreth  
Tory quizmeister writes

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## NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL

## What the butler saw was probably a fake

IF I wanted to, I could fill this column every week with tales of America's legal excesses. Earlier this week, New York University filed suit against the operators of a sexually explicit website that purports to offer a secret spy camera trained on a women's dormitory at the university.

As any web surfer knows, there are countless sites purporting to offer secret spy cameras trained on everything from Prince Charles's bedroom to the ladies' lavatory in Stringfellow's. No one, not even the most naive Web virgin, could possibly believe that these spy cameras are real, any more than a sexual fantasy billed as "What the Butler Saw" is a series of events witnessed by a butler. Yet New York University has filed a lawsuit complaining about one of these websites in language of staggering pomposity.

"There is no 'NYU Dorm Cam' installed in any NYU dorm room," complains the university,

adding that pictures of "alleged NYU co-eds romping" in a dormitory are - hold the front page - fakes! After being alerted to the existence of the site, NYU officials summoned the university's housing director who, we are told, "quickly ascertained that the rooms shown on the website were not at the school". No shit, Sherlock, as they say over here.

Thank God Britain does not suffer from the same degree of litigiousness. I recently came across a number of websites purporting to offer nude photographs of Diana, Princess of Wales. After studying these pictures extremely carefully - ie for two seconds - I have concluded that they, too, are fakes. As far as I know, the executors of the Diana's estate have yet to file a lawsuit.

LAST MONDAY, an imprint of Random House called *The Modern Library* announced its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century.

However, few people took it seriously after they discovered that nine of the ten judges are Random House authors and 59 of the 100 titles are published by Random House or its corporate parent, Bertelsmann AG.

Nevertheless, it has been fun to compare notes with my friends on how many books on the list we've actually read. My view is that you should have read at least as many as your age, which makes me six under par since I've read only 28 of them. (How's that for false modesty?)

Some of the choices are downright bizarre. For instance, James Joyce's *Ulysses* is ranked 42nd, beating *The Secret Agent* by Joseph Conrad (46th). The strangest choice, it seems to me, is the inclusion of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (77th). After *Ulysses* I dipped into *Finnegans Wake* but never got beyond the first 10 pages, and I've never met anyone who claims to have



TOBY YOUNG

*I recently came across a number of websites purporting to offer nude photographs of Diana, Princess of Wales*

read it all the way through.

It is, as Evelyn Waugh said, complete gibberish. Surely, in order to qualify as one of the 100 best English-language novels of the century, a book has to be at least readable. I couldn't even tell if it was in English, let alone whether it was any good.

THE LAST issue of *The New Yorker* to be edited by Tina Brown appeared this week and she has succeeded in producing a fitting memorial to her six-year reign. By publishing an extract from John Bayley's forthcoming memoir about Iris Murdoch's battle with Alzheimer's disease, she may have cost the retired Oxford English professor as much as £80,000.

Tina secured the serialisation rights to Iris, John Bayley's book about his wife, from St Martin's Press, his American publisher. She planned to run the extract this autumn to coincide with the book's American publication. However, when it became clear that she would soon be leaving *The New Yorker*, she decided to bring the extract forward so it could appear in her final issue.

When Bayley's British publisher, Duckworth, got wind of this, they were horrified. Duckworth had sold the British serialisation rights to *The Times*

for what is believed to be £80,000 and were anxious that no extract should appear anywhere else lest it jeopardise that agreement. Robin Baird-Smith, managing director of Duckworth, learnt of Tina's plans a week or so before her last issue was due to appear and pleaded with St Martin's Press to communicate his concerns to the magazine. Whether this happened or not is unclear, but Tina decided to go ahead.

Sure enough, as soon as the extract appeared in *The New Yorker* last Monday, *The Daily Telegraph* followed up with a 1,500-word summary of it on page three. In the newspaper business, that is what is known as a "spoiler" and, as a consequence, *The Times* decided it was no longer under an obligation to pay such a large sum of money for the British serialisation rights. "It would be fair to say this will cost John Bayley something," said Robin Baird-Smith.

According to Baird-Smith, Tina decided to run the extract earlier than intended because she is so fond of John Bayley and Iris Murdoch, and wanted it to appear in her last issue as a kind of swan-song. When I pointed out that she couldn't be that fond of Bayley if she knew that, by running the extract early, she would be costing him tens of thousands of pounds, he replied, "You said it, brother". When I reached John Bayley in his house in north Oxford he was doing his best to remain philosophical about events. "I'm sorry if I sound a bit short with you," he said, "but I've been dealing with this all day. It's entirely due to the fact that *The New Yorker* ran it earlier than they were supposed to. I haven't actually seen it yet."

"Typical Tina," said an old *New Yorker* hand when I told him the story. "This kind of mess is about as far from the Shawn era as it's possible to get."

## Chewing coca in a Bolivian jail

Dr Alison Spedding fears she was arrested for political reasons, although the excuse was possession of marijuana. By Phil Davison in La Paz

Dr Alison Spedding sat cross-legged on the patio of the Miraflores Women's Penitentiary, wrapped in several layers of alpaca wool sweaters against the chill. Her thin pigtails were intertwined, local-style, with black woolen braids. On her head was a black felt, peasant *sombrero*. In her right cheek, giving her a slightly grotesque look, was a bulging wad of coca which she constantly replenished with fresh leaves to chew, turning her teeth a greenish-black.

But for the Derbyshire woman's build - lanky and, at 5ft 10ins, a head taller than most locals - she could have passed for many of the Bolivian Aymara Indian peasants she has studied and whose traditions she has defended. She speaks Aymara fluently, as well as Spanish, and has written books on the threat to their traditional lifestyle.

Chewing coca - the base for cocaine - or drinking it as tea is perfectly legal in Bolivia, even in prison. Possessing marijuana, which is what got the 36-year-old English anthropologist into jail and could keep her there until she is over 60, is not.

Dr Spedding, who has anthropology degrees from King's College, Cambridge, and the London School of Economics, and has lived

in Bolivia for a decade, was arrested on 30 March for having 2kg (4.4lb) of marijuana in her apartment in La Paz. Because of the amount, which she does not dispute, and the fact that she was with a friend at the time, she was charged with drug trafficking, inducement to consume and criminal association, each with a potential maximum penalty of 25 years. She hopes to get less and be out within a few years with good behaviour, but admits that if she were given 25 years, "either one would try to escape or set up a prisoner exchange between England and Bolivia."

"Under Bolivian law, they distinguish between possession and trafficking according to what you might reasonably consume in 48 hours, generally taken to be about five grams in the case of marijuana," Dr Spedding told me when I visited her in jail last week.

Even after an initial 18 days in what she describes as the "hell-hole" of the headquarters of Bolivia's dreaded FELCN (Special Forces for the Battle Against Narcotics, pronounced Felk) police and three months in the women's jail, her trial has not yet begun. Her local lawyer, Leonardo Arteaga, is hoping for a first hearing by next month but suspects have been known to spend many months, even years, in pre-trial detention.

The police claimed she was selling

baya ("berry," the local nickname for cannabis) to students at La Paz San Andres University, where she lectured in anthropology and sociology. Dr Spedding denies the charges, though admits she might have passed on marijuana to fellow lecturers for nothing. A legal coca leaf field she herself owns and cultivates for chewing and tea near Chulumani, in the Yungas de La Paz region east of the capital, was confiscated after her arrest. Coca fields in the Yungas are permitted by the Bolivian government, while the fields in the nearby Chaparé region, almost all destined for the refined cocaine industry here or in Colombia, are illegal. They have become the target of a United States and United Nations-backed eradication and crop substitution programme. When I asked her if she took cocaine, she replied: "Nah, it's crap. You can get a gram for 20 Bolivianos (£2.50) but it's like coffee; all the good stuff goes for export."

She believes she was "grasped up" by a 45-year-old Argentinian man who sold her the marijuana, but that the police may have been more interested in her left-wing political leanings, including alleged contacts with Bolivian and Peruvian Marxist guerrillas.

"It was unsaleable trash. I couldn't have dealt it even if I'd wanted to," she told me beneath the barbed wire and guard towers of the maximum security jail in the shadow of the snow-clad Illimani mountain outside La Paz. "I'd had an operation a week earlier for an ectopic pregnancy, which I think was from using an IUD," she said, adding that the father was an Argentinian student. "I'd just got out of hospital two days before my arrest and I was feeling pretty naff."

Milling around the patio were the prison's other 60 women inmates, washing or drying clothes, some of them tending to children as young as seven months old. Bolivia allows women who have no close family, even those on drug charges, to keep children up to the age of five in jail with them, sharing their bunks and prison food.

Her father, Kenneth Spedding, lives in Cookham, Berkshire; her mother, Maureen Raybould, in Windesham, Surrey. She has two younger sisters in England. She said her father knew she smoked pot but probably not her mother, who is due to visit her here for the first time



Dr Alison Spedding, facing years in Bolivian jails for possession of marijuana, is allowed to chew coca leaves

Phil Davison

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become  
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THE INDEPENDENT

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## Gorgeous Gordon gets the girls' vote

Hard-bitten women  
go soft at No 11. By  
Angela Neustatter

SO ROLL over Blake Morrison, John Humphrys, Adam Phillips and Ronan Bennett, the acceptable faces of feminist lust, and make way for our own dear Chancellor of the Exchequer.

On Tuesday night Women In Journalism brought together 100 or so of its members at 11 Downing Street for a summer party to be attended by Gordon Brown. Now WJ pulls together what many see as a monstrous regiment of Grub Street's dames who have strong minds and a determination not to be sweet-talked by chaps who treat equal rights rather like a romance

to be dumped when it becomes inconvenient. The collective view, as we strode through the Chancellor's front door, was that we would consider it courteous if he at least made an appearance, but no big deal.

That was before he arrived and immediately belted the flirtatiously challenging introductory speech by Eve Pollard, with her spray-on décolletage and cascade of blond hair. He gave her an easy, matinee-idol response, all twinkling eyes and raised brows at her innuendo.

Then he began to talk, paying credit to the efforts of women in journalism and sounding informed about it, acknowledging that his policies need to keep us afloat alongside men, and then, as though we were the best friends a man could have, he was saying No 11 should have an open door and, to finish off, he added a dash of *mea culpa*, questioning



whether he had taken women seriously enough.

Charming, disarming, seductive, or what? The sound of women melting was audible; you could feel the vibration of weak knees and a cacophony of swoon-talk.

Of course we were not the first to

clock our Gordon as a sex symbol. Ullrich Jonsson has already come out as a major fan. But this was a room full of seasoned feminists including Germaine Greer, Yvonne Roberts, Maureen Freely, Louise Chunn, Linda Kelsey and of course myself - a tribe who are not used to being so speedily seduced.

And almost before the man had finished speaking there was a rush towards him, as women pushed each other aside in their eagerness to get closer to this newly designated lust object. And while there was certainly some serious talk about *things that matter*, there were also plenty of fluttering eyelashes, breasts thrust forward and expressions of rapt fascination as the man spoke.

Isabel Woolf, a voluptuous confect in fitted floral suit and enormous hair, scuttled across the floor on dangerous heels to thrust a copy

of her novel into the Chancellor's hands, along with an invite to the launch. Then the writer Dinah Hall clutched me by the arm and insisted I go with her to seek an audience. Boy was I glad I was wearing my tight top and a good squirt of Obsession. With a little kicking of ankles and vigorous thrusting we got right up close within minutes. I had lots to say but such was the impact of Gordon's eyes, gazing deep into mine, that I have forgotten precisely what we discussed. I do remember him saying he would certainly read me in future. I suppose he said that to all the ladies, but even so...

It is nothing but a delight to have a chap in the Cabinet who can deliver frisson and policies. Just as long as we don't let hormones get in the way when the Chancellor's policies cut across women's best interests.







Despite his strong views on modern architecture, The Prince of Wales went to the opening of BA's new building. Trouble was, he couldn't think of anything nice to say. By Nonie Niesewand

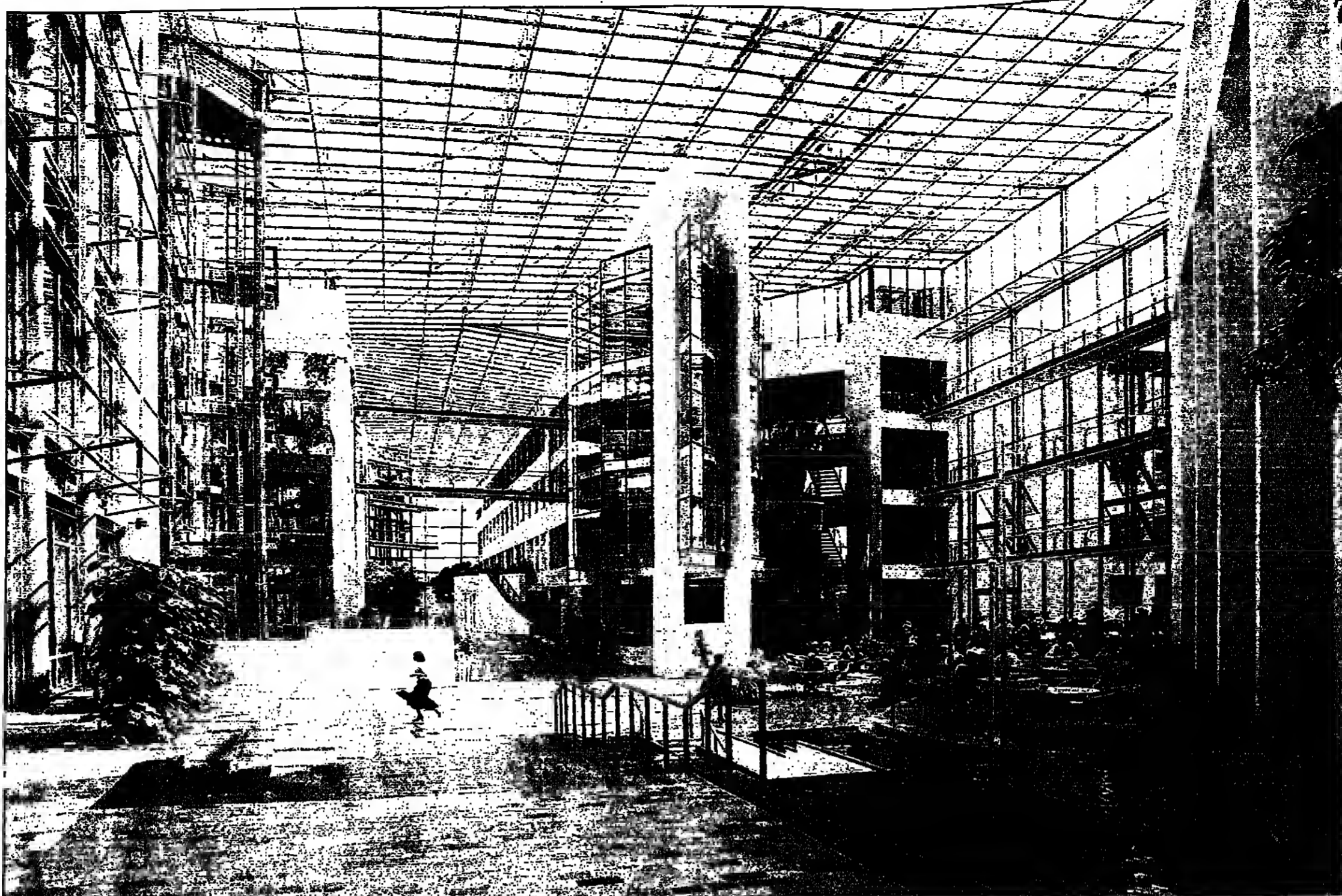
**H**ow much longer can Prince Charles go about Britain cutting the red tape on new buildings that he clearly does not like? Invited by British Airways to open Waterside, their new offices for 2,500 staff behind Heathrow, his Royal Highness could not find a single word of praise for Britain's latest – and largest – modern building. Forty acres of steel, glass and stone buildings left Britain's most controversial architectural critic strangely silent.

In April 1994, when the Prince of Wales launched his architectural magazine *Perspectives* (now, thankfully, closed down), the front cover appeared on building site hoardings proclaiming: "This is a car-buncle-free zone". His crippling one-liners on this country's modern buildings – from the proposed "car-buncle" on the face of the National Gallery to the "nuclear power stations" of the National Theatre and the British Library's "academy for secret police" – have passed into the national lexicon.

At the unveiling of the new British Airways building, in 260 acres of reclaimed land, everyone wanted to hear what HRH made of it. But all that Prince Charles could say to the Norwegian architect, Niels Torp, was: "The architect and British Airways have shown what can be done in an old rubbish dump."

Waterside is an awesome building, so big that the six office blocks, each four storeys high, are called after continents. Although British Airways claim they are U-shaped, their geometry is less curvaceous and more angled. In plan, the buildings look like model plane parts before assembly. There is the undercarriage of the 747 in America House, the wings in Europe, the tail fins in Orient House, and a boomerang at Australasia House. Grouping them all along a central paved mall, which is 175m long and canopied in glass, homogenises the group. It also humanises it. A flow of pedestrians every day is tracked by the changing clouds revealed by the atrium.

Along this "street" as BA calls it, trees grow. A river runs through the site, even though it is thoroughly urban. There are cash points, news agents, and a branch of Waitrose. Mobile phones and lap-tops on the table tops at pavement cafes remind any dawdlers that it is an office, even if it is bigger than a Cotswold town. The huge wheels of a 747, placed near the smart-card entrance, symbolise touch-down and dramatic take-off. No wonder that BA's chief executive, Bob Ayling, describes it as "an environment".



All that Prince Charles could say about the new BA headquarters at Heathrow, was: "The architect and British Airways have shown what can be done in an old rubbish dump"

Glynn Griffiths

## Charles fails the test for constructive criticism

"You'd better ask the Prince," Mr Ayling snapped when I asked what the Prince thought about the £200m project. During his tour of the building, HRH kept his eyes fixed firmly on the horizon – 260 acres of reclaimed land, sown with poppies, flax and daisies by the landscape gardener Richard Flenley. "As I get older I'll return to see how the trees are getting on," quipped the Prince, who borrowed binoculars to zoom in on nearby Windsor Castle, so close to the BA HQ that, in the past, Prince Philip has complained about the frequency of low-flying aircraft coming in to land.

After the plaque-unveiling ceremony, when the 700 spectators were showered with red, white and blue tissue paper cut into confetti, the architect's wife, Mrs Torp, expressed her disappointment that Prince Charles had said so little about her husband's finest hour.

If the Prince were genuinely interested in architecture, these are some of the things he might say about this building. A coolly rational building by an architect who de-

scribes himself as a functionalist, it manages to pull the outdoors inside to make a friendly space. It is green, not only in the way in which window sills come down below every desk height to reveal wonderful views, but also in the way, on the hottest day this month, at 27°C, the glass atrium repelled sunlight. It pioneers a new way of working that is not hierarchical. BA staff explained the practice of "hot-desking" to the Prince, who admitted that he had only heard of "hot hunking", an unpleasant practice on submarines in the Royal Navy. Best of all, the building enshrines a new attitude to architecture, which is precisely what HRH wants to promote – a building to make its inhabitants' working life happier and more self-indulgent, self-sufficient and profitable within a light-filled environment. You always know what is going on outside.

If the Prince had wanted to look for a trend – and these days even architectural gurus are fashion victims – Waterside puts an interesting spin on modernism. This is the world as a global village. Primal

forms and basic geometry transcend the ordinary grid. Each block is contoured to wrap around gardens and to jut out into vertiginous balconies. Indigenous gardens flower along the borders.

Then there is the interior design.

*His Royal Highness could not find a single word of praise for Britain's latest modern building*

Designer buzz-words last for about as long as it takes the paint to dry. But feng shui, the 500-year-old Chinese practice of positioning things to get the best energy flow, caught the attention of BA, and since 1996 they have employed (at £375 a day) a feng shui consultant, Simon Brown, to give the building good vibes. All the boring administration takes place here. The staff in

the commercial, financial and strategic arms of the airline, as well as the health centre and customer training services, are down to earth, yet Mr Brown encouraged them all to arrange their desks and chairs in the best feng shui positions. He calms the staff down with blue, grey and green colour schemes and activates energetic discussion with red and purple and yellow. Round oval desks help communications, he says, and because corners are bad feng shui, ivy grown in trellises and olive and fig trees grown in the street are positioned with the help of Mr Brown's compass to deflect any "negative energy flow". Water running through the place is "good", so are banners hung over walls.

"Look, I'm a pragmatist," says Mr Brown. "I got the architects' attention when I shared with them NASA's findings on plants acting as the world's most efficient air pollution filters. They agreed with all my suggestions but one, to give each desk user their own lamp – and that was because of EU regulations."

There is something lyrical about

the architect, even though Niels Torp is adamant that he is "totally rational". Astonishingly, he is also sympathetic to the Prince. "What he wants is a friendly dialogue between the user of the building and the people who are building it." Where he falls out with HRH is that he believes the Prince's means to meet the peoples' needs are unnatural. "You can still use a modern tongue to give the answers," he says, which sounds like a Norse legend, until you realise that bolt-on heritage is utterly repugnant to this modernist.

The Prince and the architect buddled over the scale model of Waterside when the Prince asked about the balance between the building and the landscape.

"No, he made no comment upon the building," says Mr Torp. "But I'm concerned about scale, and balancing the building in its landscape. Opening it up to nature diminishes the size a little. I'm not making monuments." The landscape architects William Kent and "Capability" Brown would have cheered.

Mr Torp's building, monumental though it is, seemingly just touches down in this field. The sleight of hand is all the more interesting when you consider that he built mounds sown with grass, and made fountains and lakes, not purely as designer tricks to show off at the Chelsea Garden show, but to back up security. Strategically placed around the building at certain points, they create barriers.

Prior to HRH's arrival by helicopter, all 700 visitors to BA had been given security passes, told what to wear and what time to arrive and leave (before – and then after – royalty). They were then held up in tailbacks while every ID was scrutinised. Fine, but someone must have told his Royal Highness that if he cannot even open contemporary buildings with a good grace, what chance is there for the plans that Tony Blair has drawn up for the monarchy, and in particular for the People's Prince?

*'Practical Feng Shui for Business' by Simon Brown (Ward Lock, £14.95)*

## The decorators are in at the V&A until 2001

The world's finest collection of British decorative art is having the facelift, but it won't be done overnight. By Nonie Niesewand

THE FUSTY CORRIDORS that house the Victoria and Albert museum's collection of British decorative arts from 1500 to 1900 have just been granted £15m from Heritage Lottery fund for a facelift. Working with the architect Alastair Gourley, Mick Jagger's decorator, David Milner and the modernist designer Dinah Casson are going to smarten up the galleries under the watchful eye of the project curator, Christopher Wilk, to tell the story of the evolution of British design from the Tudors to the end of Queen Victoria's reign.

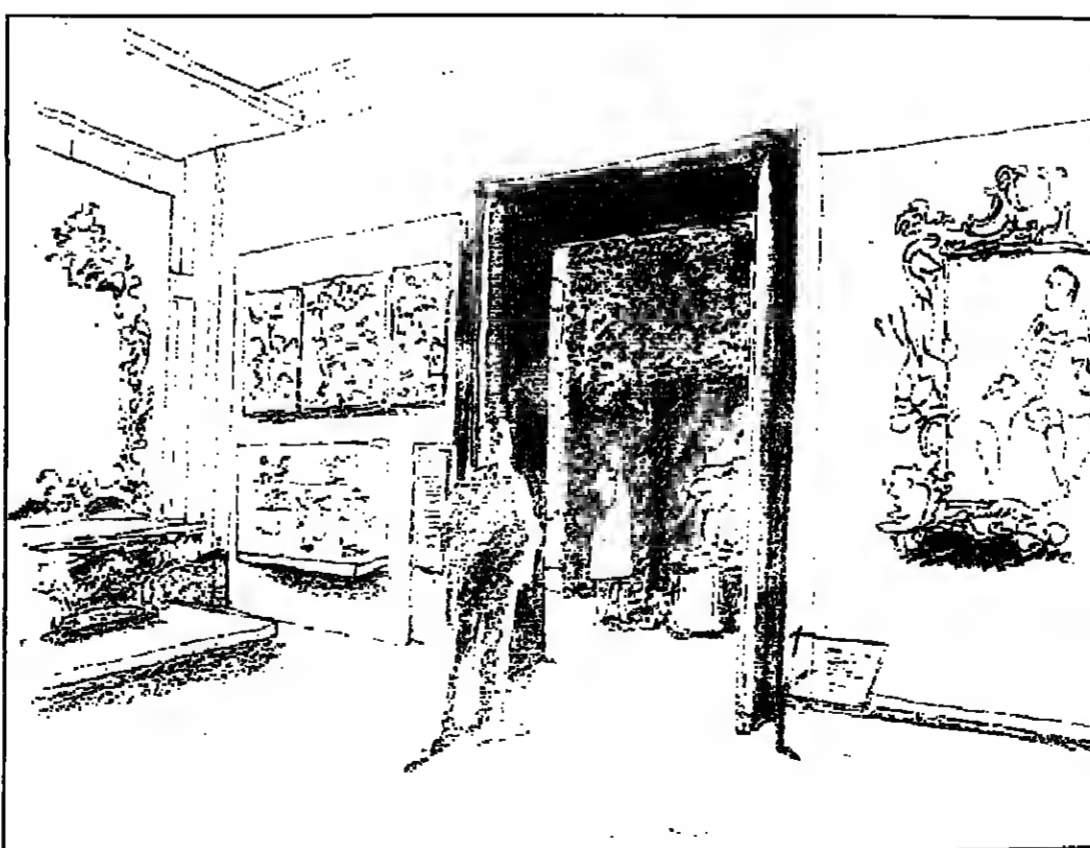
There are more than 3,000 objects in what the V&A's director, Dr Alan Borg, describes as "the most comprehensive and accessible collection of British art and design in the world". There are 15 British galleries occupying 3,000 square metres, which makes the space a small museum in its own right. The galleries will be painted and papered, and fitted out with display cabinets and video screens. The lighting is to be improved and air conditioning installed.

Furniture is the great survivor over centuries, far better than ceramics or costume, and the V&A has some curiosities. There is the ornate four-poster known as the Great Bed

of Ware, showing no signs of tear in the safekeeping of the V&A, a desk where Henry VIII tore up his alimony notes, and a world first in plumbing: the Victorian washstand with a hidden cistern in the cabinet and inlaid fishes swimming around the basin. Portraits like that of the sad-eyed More family clustered around Thomas, painted about the time that "he fell out with the King big-time on religion" will be explained further with video clips.

If you want to know what the Tudor blade wore when he strutted his stuff around town, you will find his ruffled shirts and velvet pantaloons here. There are jewelled costumes as well as jewellery, wigs and ribbons, shoes and hats and handbags. Until now they have been housed in ill-lit display cases, displayed with about as much thought as a car boot sale.

As this century closes, curators of national museums the world over are having an identity crisis. Their predecessors compiled inventories and then just stuffed labelled objects into every available niche and display cabinet. Mid-century modernists shuffled these collections to adopt a more sequential look at archival material. But that ency-



Artist's impression of the view from the Rococo gallery through to Public Entertainments

clopaedic art historian's overview served only to highlight weaknesses in the collection. Now that they can use film clips to compensate for the gaps, David Milner and Dinah Casson have taken a scriptwriter's approach, developing a story line around everyday household and fashion objects with help from Christopher Wilk.

Exasperated at the suggestion that video clips showing objects in use could be interpreted as "dumbing down", Christopher Wilk says, "If the only way in which you can show a visitor how an object works is by showing it in use, on film, how can that be a bad thing?"

Admittedly the V&A's Tudor collection is not encyclopaedic – very few objects from the 16th century survive – but its Victorian collections are the best in the world. Once the new controlled environment is in place, some objects can be put on display for the first time in years. The sight of carpets designed by William Morris, Christopher Wilk says, will more than compensate for the removal from the British Galleries of four Chippendale chairs commissioned by the actor David Garrick.

You have just five days to check out the collection before the galleries

close, to re-open in 2001. Then it is hoped that they will attract around 100,000 more visitors.

Gwyn Miles, head of major projects at the museum, still has to find private sponsors and donors to match the £15m lottery money. It is ironic that while the V&A has lottery funding but no patrons for its British Galleries project, it has a patron but no lottery money for Daniel Libeskind's new building, the Spiral, to be grafted on to the Victorian museum.

An enthusiastic sponsor is willing to pay millions to get the controversial Libeskind extension off the drawing board. The Millennium Commission turned down the V&A's application for £35m to build the intricate origami-like building because it was "insufficiently distinctive". Let's hope that label sticks with Kensington and Chelsea town planning committee, who have the plans for the Spiral under review. They are expected to give their decision on its fate in November.

If the Spiral gets approval, the V&A will make a third application for lottery funding for the project. It would be astonishing if only exercises in nostalgia are worthy of Heritage Lottery funding.



# Get up, get on up

The Grand Old Man of soul is still giving fans the funk they want. He no longer manages the splits, but at 65 he remains the consummate showman and bandleader. By Geoff Brown



James Brown may be 65 but he's still a major influence as a live performer

Rez Features

IN A WEEK in which Bootsy Collins, the bassist who as a teenager reinvigorated the funk music of James Brown by inspiring *Ser Machine* and other hits, also played the *Inventing America* concert series, it was fitting and astonishing to see his 63-year-old former boss so sprightly as he played the first of two nights at the Barbican.

Although no longer able to dazzle with the fleet footwork and athleticism of his heyday, Brown retains the charisma of a pioneering bandleader.

Everything, of course, is designed

to give him as many rest opportunities as possible. Dancers, singers, long instrumentals – even a magician – did their best to give the godfather of soul time to recover.

He did many of the hits his fans had come to hear. In "Cold Sweat" he "gave the drummer some", jumped, not too high, and didn't manage the splits – but who would expect that from limbs that have kept the hardest working man in show business going for so long?

Just as when Brown emerged from jail in 1991 and took his new band, the 12-piece Soul Generals,

back on the road, it was hard to believe that here was a man reportedly broken by drugs, paranoia, and an inability to find his niche on record since the mid-Seventies.

He followed "Cold Sweat" with "Living in America", perhaps an ironic celebration for a country which did not treat Brown well for at least the first 20 years of his life.

But for the first half of the set he again showed what a master bandleader he can be with "I Got the Feeling" and the ballad "Try Me".

The most influential black musician of the Sixties and Seventies, bar

no one, then took a breather and, like the hardened campaigner he is, let others carry the load with a series of fairly inconsequential solo spots apart from a delightful doo-wop feature for Bittersweet, his five-piece group of women singers.

Refreshed by the long rest, Brown returned with a strong reading of yet another of his classic ballads, "It's a Man's World".

And, a full 90 minutes into the set, he launched himself into "I'll Go Crazy", a blues so forceful that it blew the bassist's amplifier. They cruised into "Get on the Good Foot"

with Brown now clearly enjoying the benefits of his second wind.

Despite his not inconsiderable age, the personal problems which have beset him throughout this decade and the fact that the pop music world has changed beyond all recognition, Brown still clearly remains a major influence, if not as a recording artist, then as an essential live performer and provider of samples on myriad hit singles even today.

This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper.

## ON THE AIR

BAYAN NORTHCOTT

IF THESE were normal times at Radio 3, I would be devoting this review to praising such gems of the week as last Saturday afternoon's edition of *From Where I'm Sitting*, in which that versatile accompanist Iain Burnside and the peerless clarinetist Michael Collins drew the ear deep into Brahms's F minor Clarinet Sonata simply by rehearsing selected passages in different ways.

Or I would be celebrating the fact that, amid Radio 3's ever-rigidifying schedules, it is still possible to catch a programme such as Monday evening's *A Man, a Woman and a Double Bass*, in which the singing cellist Lowri Blake and the humming double bassist Peter Buckoke zoomed and chanted through a whole sequence of off-beat little numbers.

But, of course, these are not normal times. Nor is the sudden announcement that Nicholas Kenyon is relinquishing the controllership two years early to concentrate on the Proms and millennial projects the bottom of it. In fact, this scarcely more than formalises a situation that has already existed for the past 18 months since John Birt's overnight internal revolution resulted in the appointment of Hilary Boulding as commissioning editor, music (policy). The recent changes of the daytime schedule – Joan Bakewell's interminable *Artist of the Week*, the often condescending *Sound Stories*, the manic tattle of Sean Rafferty's *In Tune* – which Kenyon has been required to put a spin on are actually Boulding innovations.

Meanwhile, armed with the prejudices of an array of focus groups and the findings of an immense BBC enquiry into listeners' "lifestyles", Boulding has apparently been telling the handful of distinguished producers who still hang on in BBC Classical Music that nobody listens to their programmes anyway,

and has even forbidden Michael Berkeley to invite Alfred Brendel on to *Private Passions* because he is "too serious" (evidently she has failed to twig that Brendel is actually one of the great deadpan comics of our time). If, as is widely expected, she succeeds to the controllership, she will at least have to justify her policies in public, which could be interesting. But the real significance of Boulding's rise is that she has the backing of Matthew Bannister.

Bannister, it will be recalled, lost Radio 1 the odd million listeners when he was its controller, and was rewarded in the mad world of BBC management by being made director of BBC radio. This week it has emerged that he has authorised the milking of some five million pounds out of Radio 3 and 4 programme "economies" in order to buy more glitzy presenters for Radio 1. It would be difficult to imagine a more direct assault on the view apparently held by the BBC Chairman, Sir Christopher Bland, that the Corporation is either a public service sustainer of high culture, or it is nothing.

So why the "fattening up" of Radio 1? Suddenly, an awful scenario suggests itself. In two or three years time, as it seeks to take Britain into the common currency, the Government will be sorely in need of at least the acquiescence of the Murdoch press – which even now is renewing its campaign for the abolition of the BBC licence.

No doubt it would ease the course of any backstage *quid pro quo* if it were tacitly understood that such lucrative hits of a privatised BBC as the digital service that Birt is dashing to develop, or BBC Worldwide, or even Radio 1, were open for management buyout.

Then everybody would be happy – except, dear musical listener, you and I. Of course, this is sheer paranoid fantasy. It couldn't happen here. Could it?

## LYRIC SHEETS

MARTIN NEWELL

The BBC has begun an efficiency drive so that they can pay more to their top DJs on Radio One. Have they misjudged the requirements of their regional listeners?

### EFFICIENT RADIO

A farmer snatching breakfast  
Between his chores at dawn  
Turned on his kitchen radio  
And throttling a yawn  
Said: "Ah, I see those people  
In West One 1AA,  
They musta got that letter  
I sent the other day.  
"I told 'em, it wants changing  
To suit more modern ways  
'The public don't need news  
and views

They want more top DJs  
They need young blades  
from London

To keep us on our toes  
Some arbiters of fashion  
To strike a bold new pose  
And with a stupid posse

To shout the odds all day  
It makes a fuckin' racket  
Which keeps the crows away  
They don't need documentaries  
Or airy-fairy drama  
They want a dude with attitude  
Who understands the farmer  
Some pramper with an ego  
They poached from MTV  
Who did some media studies  
Or took a bit of E  
And plays the latest trip-hop  
Cos cutting edge is good  
Like when the chainsaw jams on  
A knotty bit of wood  
It's why I got two speakers  
And hurried 'em in holes  
Cos when I crank the sound up  
It scares away the moles."

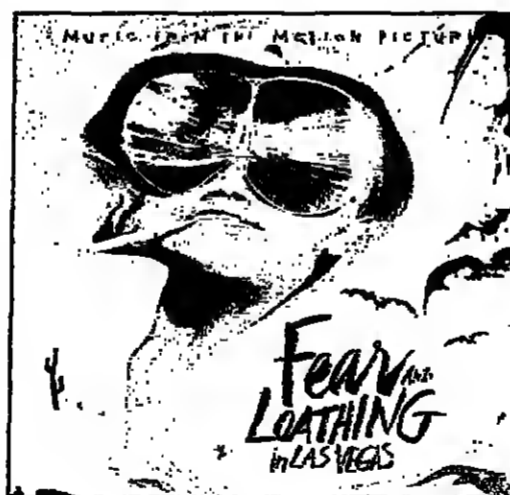
## THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

'Babes in the Wood' has its moments but is disabled by the common British practice of staffing sitcoms with comedy humanoids – outwardly like people but instantly distinguishable from them by the hysteria of their affective life

TV REVIEW, PAGE 20

## THIS WEEK'S ALBUM RELEASES

REVIEWED BY ANDY GILL



**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Music from the Motion Picture *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*  
(Geffen GED 25218)

**DAVE GROHL**  
Music from the Motion Picture *Touch*  
(Capitol/World 855 632 2)

IT DOESN'T take more than a cursory glance at their album charts to see that film, rather than music, is the dominant cultural motor in America these days. Other than generic gangsta-rap and country, the only CDs that are selling are movie soundtracks: James Horner's all-conquering *Titanic* has been followed into the top 10 recently by those for *Bukworth*, *Godzilla* and *City of Angels* as, deprived of meaningful aesthetic choices by ruthlessly efficient marketing operations and the pitiful reach of their own cultural horizons, American audiences buy more deeply into ever more shallow Tinseltown tat. It's the closest they get to a significant shared experience – outside of Disneyworld, that is. The current chart-topper in both media is *Armageddon*, which seems entirely appropriate: if this is the most fulfilling collective experience that money can buy, the end of the world might as well be now.

Not that the soundtrack for *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* – a splendid compilation of drug songs, kitsch novelties and freak classics from such as Big Brother, Buffalo Springfield and Bob Dylan – will

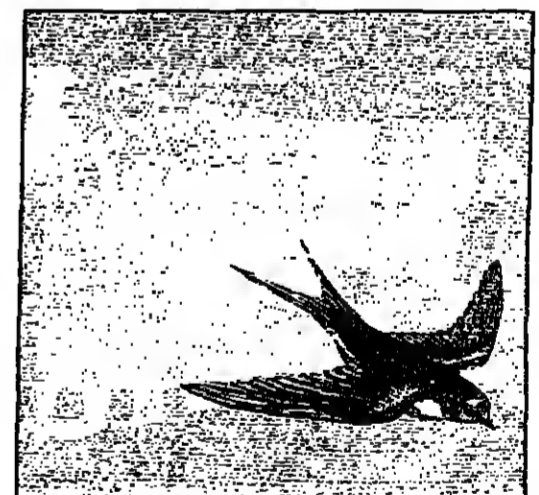
Favourite moment from 'Fear and Loathing...'  
Crazed and dazed on an adrenochrome trip, Depp wonders, as Debbie Reynolds's excruciating 'Tammy' fades away, "What kind of rat bastard psychotic would play that song right now, at this moment?" Your lawyer, that's who ...

cause that many ripples on the cultural seismograph. It's far too individual (and far too good) for that, a finely gauged sequence of tracks linked by dialogue snippets, with Johnny Depp's eerily accurate Hunter Thompson impersonation furnishing the requisite mood of gonzo paranoia.

Favourite moment: crazed and dazed on an adrenochrome trip, Depp wonders, as Debbie Reynolds's excruciating "Tammy" fades away, "What kind of rat bastard psychotic would play that song right now, at this moment?" Your lawyer, that's who.

You have to hand it to Dave Grohl: for a drummer, he doesn't lack for ambition. Indeed, his soundtrack for Paul Schrader's film of Elmore Leonard's plodding faith-bealer yarn, *Touch*, is more significant for what it represents – Grohl's aspirations – than for any musical criteria. Like his Foo Fighters work, it is efficient enough, but unlikely to win awards.

At times, it is like listening to Grohl's showreel, as he slips from desultory country noodling ("Making Popcorn") to "Gloria"-style riffs ("Outrage") to vaseline-lensed billing and cooing ("Saints in Love") to driving surf guitar ("Spinning Newspapers"), auditioning *The Many Moods of Grohl*. And though most of them don't merit a second thought, there are occasional moments that suggest he may have an aptitude for the job, particularly the enigmatic "August Murray Theme". If they were making *The Third Man* today, it might pass muster as the theme.



**SPARKLEHORSE**  
Good Morning Spider  
(Parlophone 496014 2)

THERE'S A strange, evanescent quality to this second offering from Sparklehorse that makes it both beguiling and hard to pin down, as if Mark Linkous (who effectively is Sparklehorse) were modestly trying to hide its manifold attractions behind a screen of diversions.

It's a gentle, vulnerable album, full of touchingly sympathetic songs about animals, birds and insects rendered with a deliberately amateurish charm, in the manner of naive art. Neil Young is an obvious influence, particularly on Linkous's vocals, and the album manages to emulate Young's trademark blend of fragility and power without sacrificing its own individual character, which is rooted in the odd textures employed – a musical menagerie that includes harmonium, optigon, vibes and a child's "speak and spell" toy.

Whatever devices he uses, Linkous takes care to disguise his intentions with a series of musical feints: even a rowdy rocker like "Happy Man" employs diversionary tactics – it is presented as if heard through a badly tuned radio for its first few minutes, before eventually surfacing as a taut Buzzcockian rocker.

Elsewhere, tracks seem constructed from semi-audible smudges of sound, like driftwood sculptures – it's as if they've been recorded, then partially erased, leaving the ghosts of the songs behind. The result is a strikingly patinated work, whose charm grows with successive listens.

# Strange frontier

An opera about a national border? Irresistible, writes John Crace



Richard Chew and Orlando Gough, collaborators on 'The Shouting Fence'

Geraint Lewis

Artistic endeavour tends to fall into two categories. The work you do to pay the bills, and the work that is just so ambitious, so large... so outrageous, it becomes irresistible. *The Shouting Fence*, a new choral piece by Orlando Gough and Richard Chew, to be premiered outdoors at the Royal Festival Hall this Sunday, most definitely falls into the second category.

*The Shouting Fence* is the story of a community split in two, and is based on the village of Majdal Shams on the Golan Heights which was divided by the ceasefire line after the 1973 war. Many of those who were working on the Syrian side of the border were unable to return to Israel. And as there are few telephone links between the two countries, the only way villagers could stay in contact with friends and families was by shouting across the border fence. So, in what has become a ritual, every Friday, the Muslim holiday, villagers from both sides gather at the fence and exchange news and gossip with the aid of loud-hailers.

Gough first heard about Majdal Shams in 1995, and was immediately struck by the choral possibilities. But like many good ideas it remained undeveloped, until this time last year when Gough had another outdoor work, *Azazus Mio*, at the Festival Hall. "I was taken by the mountainous feel of the different levels of the South Bank and instinctively felt it would

make the perfect setting for *The Shouting Fence*," he says. So he approached the programming committee and persuaded them to commission it.

Which is how you will come to find 60 singers, dotted about in various locations, such as the roof of Queen Elizabeth Hall, the concrete walkways and the top of the Festival Hall performing a crossfire of part-oratorio, part-street theatre, this Sunday.

If this all sounds a little over the top, then it is intentionally so. Gough's music has never been easy to pigeon-hole at the best of times, as he's happily criss-crossed through any number of different genres, from minimalism in the early Eighties, when he played the Michael Nyman band off stage at the Almeida Festival, through dance collaborations with Ashley Page, an opera with Caryl Churchill, to his own blend of jazz, classical and salsa. All of which has made Gough something of a musician's musician - meaning he's adored by other musicians and the critics, but hasn't made much impression on the general public.

And if this riddles with Gough, he shows no sign of it. Quite the reverse, in fact. He retains a boyish enthusiasm for everything he does, which probably explains why he looks much younger than his 44 years, and appears to be so excited by the possibilities of the new that he doesn't have time to consider the importance of commercial suc-

cess. Which is just as well, really. Because with *The Shouting Fence* he is going out on a limb. "I'm on something of a honeymoon with a cappella music at the moment," he confides. "Singing is the most direct form of emotional expression. You can do a billion clever things with a violin, but you can never get the same intensity as with the voice. And singing outdoors is perhaps the purest form of all. With no helpful acoustics, you have to battle to communicate - which is the essence of music."

But if you're expecting some gentle antiphonies bouncing back and forth across the South Bank, then think again. Not that there aren't moments of intense lyricism, mind, but these are more than counterbalanced by numbers which stretch the human voice to its limits. "We have tried to find a musical language to convey the struggle to be heard," says Richard Chew. "The struggle is both physical, in that the villagers literally have to shout as loud as they can to make themselves heard above everyone else's shouting, and metaphorical. These people feel abandoned. They are stateless; they have nowhere of their own to live. Or to die."

In Chew, Gough has found the ideal collaborator. Chew trained as an opera singer and has sung at the ENO and Glyndebourne. His speciality is contemporary music.

For *The Shouting Fence*, they have created their own ef-

# Welcome to the man from Unkle

Mo Wax's independence as a label hinges on the 'Unkle' project. Its creator spoke to Fiona Sturges



Mo Wax founder James Lavelle with DJ Shadow, his collaborator on the 'Psyence Fiction' album (below)

IF YOU could gather together all your favourite musicians from your teenage years on one album, who would they be? It is the kind of proposal that most music lovers idly consider from time to time, and it is a dream realised by mercurial wunderkind and Star Wars' obsessive James Lavelle with the long-awaited Unkle Project.

The album *Psyence Fiction*, executed with his principal collaborator and Californian beat master, DJ Shadow, signifies the culmination of four years toil and brings together nearly all of Lavelle's teen idols, bar Darth Vader. "I wanted to do an album which was an amalgamation of culturally important sounds," he explains. "It incorporates all the music that has made me feel alive."

Records. He gathered contacts and, in 1992, borrowed £1,000 off his boss to set up his own label. Mo Wax's first really successful outing was a cerebral compilation called *Heads*, which showcased the likes of La Funk Mob and hip-hop producer Howie B. It offered a lofty, though stylish, collision of hip-hop, funk, jazz and soul that was seen as one of the first truly coherent linking of genres and was greeted rapturously by critics. Since then, Mo Wax has led the way in a multitude of musical categories. Its breakbeats were first accorded the maxim "intelligent drum 'n' bass" (as opposed to the teeth-rattling chaos of earlier jungle), while the label's laid-back brand of hip-hop was seen as one of the more successful ventures into the genre and



Appropriating a similar formula to Massive Attack's *Mezzanine* - different vocalists, mesmerising instrumentals, a melange of musical styles - this ostentatious project reveals Lavelle's almost fanatic eclecticism. The notion of putting rock's arch miserabilist Thom Yorke on a record with the Beastie Boys' cardinal miscreant Mike D and the Verve's Richard Ashcroft may seem incongruous, perhaps even sacrilegious when you consider the presence of Metallica's Jason Newstead, but Lavelle has seamlessly united their singular sounds in an album which threatens to be the record of the year.

The 24-year-old Oxford boy has an impressive pedigree for off-the-wall projects, being the brains behind the relentlessly hip record label Mo Wax. As a teenager, Lavelle graduated from working as a DJ in local clubs to spending an edifying few years at West London's Honest Jon's

was accorded the dreaded label "trip-hop". Now seen as a long-standing progenitor of "cool", Mo Wax has a loyal following and an inventory of collaborators that span the globe, from New York's fourth Beastie Boy, Money Mark, to Japan's dance guru DJ Krush.

While other independent labels have fallen out of favour with fidgety, fashion-conscious consumers - the one-time ultra-hip label Acid Jazz has virtually disappeared - Mo Wax

has displayed remarkable longevity. "We are a small label with a real vision," explains Lavelle. "My job is to oversee every stage of the process and make sure that we carry on without compromise."

Paradoxically, it is the essentially "underground" ambience of Mo Wax music that keeps the sales figures buoyant. But their status as an "independent" label, suggestive of an entirely self-sufficient operation, is misleading since, in 1995, Lavelle's business was subsumed into the PolyGram empire via A&M records. Problems of funding meant that Lavelle had to reluctantly turn down the first records by both Portishead and Tricky, and moving into a large corporation seemed the only option. "We are still independent in practice," assures Lavelle. "I still sign all the acts, we distribute and market ourselves and design all our own packaging."

The identity of Mo Wax is vital to Lavelle: "You don't remember the day a record was released, all you remember is what you've got in your hand. If it looks special then you will value it far more." But success lies not only in the aesthetic sensibilities - though the records are designed and packaged to perfection - but in Lavelle's extraordinary ability to spot new talent. "I look for

artists who have the ability to change the world and change me. I have no other real formula." But Lavelle clearly has clairvoyant-like foresight - the starry list of contributors on *Psyence Fiction* could have been hand-picked from this month's index of top-selling albums, despite the fact that he has had them up his sleeve for three years. "I don't think I was there before anyone else," he maintains. "For me, the success of the Verve and Radiohead is a real boost. I simply shared a belief."

It is undoubtedly the backing of A&M records that allowed Lavelle to put his dream project into practice, but the wobbly state of the music industry means that even the shelter of a giant corporation isn't always enough. Due to poor sales, A&M records is about to go out of business and its acts absorbed by other PolyGram imprints. The release of *Psyence Fiction* could either keep Mo Wax esconced in the comfy confines of PolyGram or, if sales are poor, mark the label's return to the impoverished world of true "independence".

But with James Lavelle at the helm, it is unlikely that their luck has run out just yet.

*Psyence Fiction* is released on A&M on 24 August

## THIS WEEK'S ALBUM RELEASES

REVIEWED BY ANDY GILL



BEDLAM AGO GO  
Estate Style Entertainment  
(Sony Sono Square/Friendly Fire Communications BDLMA CD)

A DANCE/rock/ras crossover outfit of ebullient, surly mien, Bedlam Ago Go are the Leeds equivalent of Manchester's Dust Junkies or London's Lo-Fidelity Allstars, applying harsh words to harsher social situations. Championing the council-estate underdog, the Bedlam collective jams together breakbeats, techno pulses, guitar riffs and dub effects into the chunky grooves which backdrop unflinching accounts of underclass life like "Aimy", a lament for a girl who wanted "a semi-detached stone-clad shack'n'babies/a white wed-dim'n'beddin' from the magazine pages," but who winds up mired in crack addiction; or the subject of "Asylum", depressed but clearly *compos mentis*, trapped among the truly ill.

Musically, Bedlam have an individual sense of style, drawing on sources as diverse as Seventies rap pioneer Gil Scott-Heron and Latino auteur Edmundo Ros. Most effectively, the sinister lope of The Velvet Underground's "The Gift" is used as the basis for "Flat 29", one of several accounts of stoned, paranoid out- siderdom - few can evoke better than Bedlam the peculiar mix of hopelessness and bedonism in modern British society.

The pervasive air of despair in these missives stings all the more sharply for the energy involved in their creation: who knows what equivalent talents are rotting for lack of opportunity?



4 HERO  
Two Pages  
(Tallin Loud 598 462-2)

DRUM'n'BASS duo 4 Hero's latest album suffers from the genre's usual gigantism, an endemic condition which apparently prevents jungle artists releasing anything more concise than a double-album.

In the case of *Two Pages*, the individual discs - or Pages - are devoted to the group's two basic styles. Page One featuring a soul-jazz variant built on double-bass and strings, while Page Two delves into techno drum'n'bass, with bleepy noises and hyperactive percussion circling round each other without ever quite reaching a satisfying rapprochement.

With titles such as "Warmholes", "Star Chasers" and "Cosmic Tree", the album lays claim to the spirit of Seventies space-jazz, but the music itself is far too insipid to support such comparisons. If the late Sun Ra, undisputed king of that genre, established anything, it was the principle that the very sound of space-jazz should exemplify the essential otherness of such cosmic yearnings, which he achieved through an exhilarating mix of bliss and terror.

But it's a far cry from Ra's *Strange Celestial Roods* and *Disco 3000* to 4 Hero's listless zombie soul, which seems to seek no more alien surroundings than a suburban wine-bar.

LISTINGS ON PAGES 17 & 18

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